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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PLACE: Office of the Special Assistant to the Secretary for Refugee and Migration Affairs

DATE: January 22, 1975

SUBJECT: Chilean Refugees

PARTICIPANTS: Father Renato Poblete - Head of Social Action for the Latin American Catholic Bishops Conference and Political Adviser to Cardinal Silva of Chile

Frank L. Kellogg - Special Assistant to the Secretary for Refugee and Migration Affairs

George Lister - Special Assistant to the Assistant Secretary for Latin America

Louis A. Wiesner - Director, Office of Refugee and Migration Affairs

Chris C. Pappas - Deputy Director, Office of Refugee and Migration Affairs

William Richardson - Congressional Relations

Ferris R. Jameson - Office of Refugee and Migration Affairs

In a meeting with Father Poblete, he strongly urged the U.S. to open its doors to ex-Chile refugees and Chilean detainees who are to be released by the Government of Chile. He noted that other countries, principally those of Western Europe, Canada, Australia, and to some degree, the Eastern European bloc, had accepted large numbers of third country refugees from Chile, as well as some Chilean nationals from Peru. He stated that the only country with a completely open immigration policy at the moment for ex-Chile refugees is Algeria.

Chile Project (#S199900006)
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In his discussion, Father Poblete strongly emphasized the following:

- Among the Chilean refugees in Peru and Argentina and the detainees in Chile, there are large numbers of non-Marxist members of the "liberal left" or "Christian left" who do not wish to go to communist dominated countries. In fact, Padre Poblete estimates that over 95% of those refugee/detainees wishing to come to the United States, would not pose security problems and would come from liberal groups in Chile. Most were simply caught in the aftermath of events in Chile during the coup. Many of these people had little or no political association with the Allende Government but may have merely worked for that government and thus had been jailed or forced to flee the country.

- Father Poblete doubts that strong Marxists will wish to come to the United States. This would be totally contrary to the principles for which they stand. The convictions of active Marxist supporters of the Allende Government would preclude them from seeking U.S. entry. Father Poblete said that most hold the U.S. responsible for many of the ills under Allende as well as his overthrow.

- U.S. resettlement of Chilean refugees will be of assistance not only on humanitarian grounds but will also be helpful internally in Chile. He believed it will help disabuse the Chilean government of the impression that all persons who were picked up in the months following the coup or who currently oppose certain policies of the government are communists.

- U.S. acceptance of refugees will greatly assist the U.S. image in Latin America and indicate that we indeed are sympathetic to the plight of refugees from all parts of the world.

- Father Poblete further predicts the release of large numbers of detainees in the near future. He expects the release of detainees from Chile will be speeded up greatly when the government returns to use of the civil courts as opposed to trying people under martial law. He expects that this change will come about within the next few weeks. Poblete's estimates of the total number of

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detainees to be released is between 2,500 and 3,500. He stated that the Chilean Government has already put forward one list of 100 for release upon their acceptance for resettlement by third countries; has offered 200 to Mexico. He further expects the Government of Venezuela to ask for release of some 50 detainees this week which will be granted. Father Poblete estimates that some 400 to 500 and possibly more detainees/refugees will wish to come to the United States if given the opportunity.

In responding to Father Poblete, Mr. Kellogg said the U.S. was indeed sympathetic to the plight of Chilean refugees and detainees. The Department of State has proposed a program for the admittance on a case-by-case basis of Chilean refugees who were eligible for entry under the Immigration Act. Father Poblete was informed that the Immigration Act does not provide for the admission of refugees from Western Hemisphere countries; that visa numbers are not currently available. As a result, a parole program was the only means of entry. The Department is consulting with the appropriate committees of Congress before formally proposing a parole program to the Attorney General.

It was suggested that Father Poblete might wish to call on the counsels of appropriate committees to discuss the situation in Chile with them as well.

NOTES ON POBLETE

Father Poblete was reportedly a strong opponent of the Allende Government. Indeed during the meeting he made statements supporting the Chilean Government's attempt to eliminate the MIR infrastructure in Chile to prevent civil war, terrorism and kidnapping. Father Poblete attended Fordham University. He spoke in behalf of Cardinal Silva of Chile. Father Poblete was successful in meeting with Mr. Loughran of the Senate Judiciary Committee but was unable to contact Mr. Cline of the House Judiciary Committee.

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